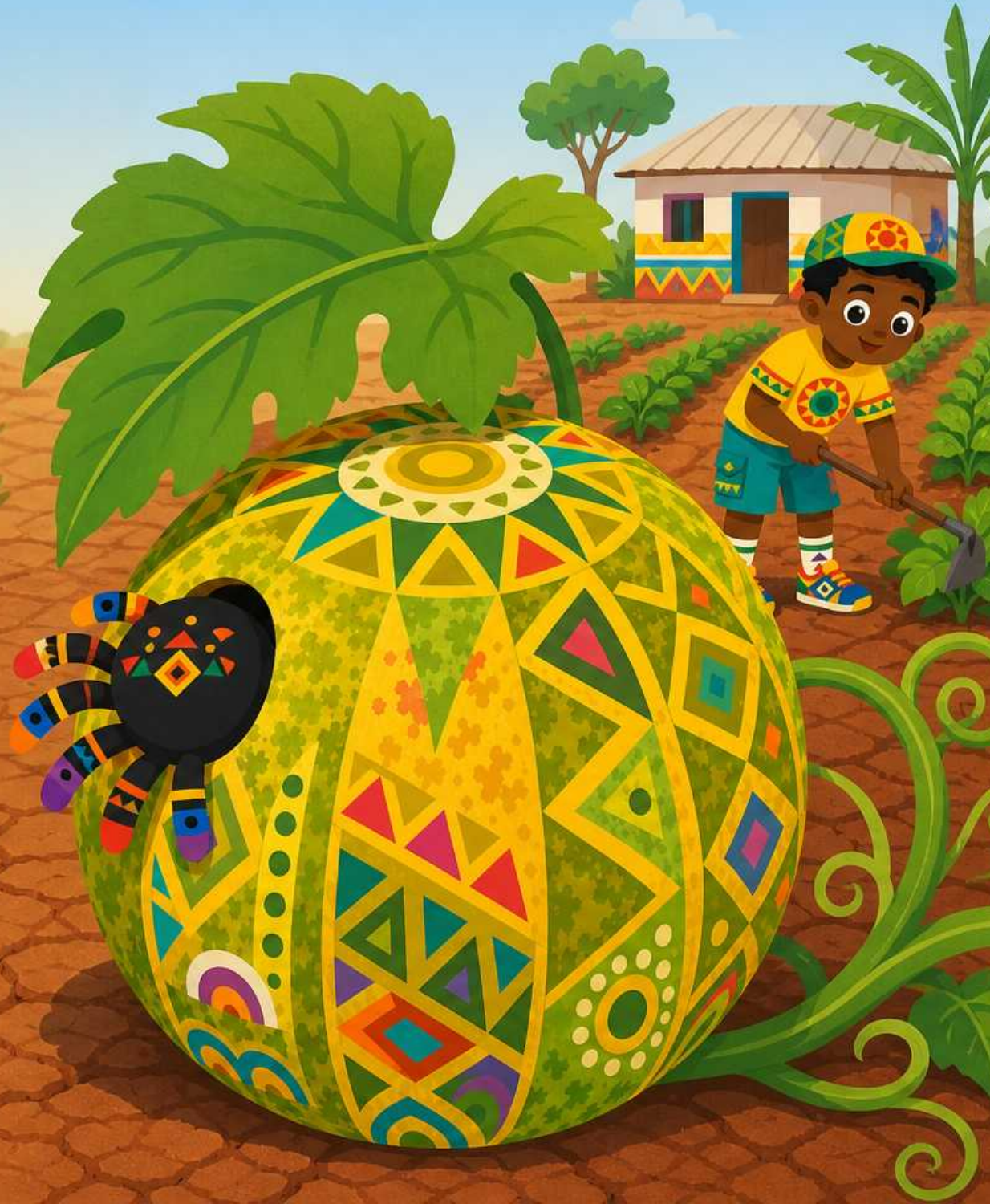


Anansi Eats Too Much



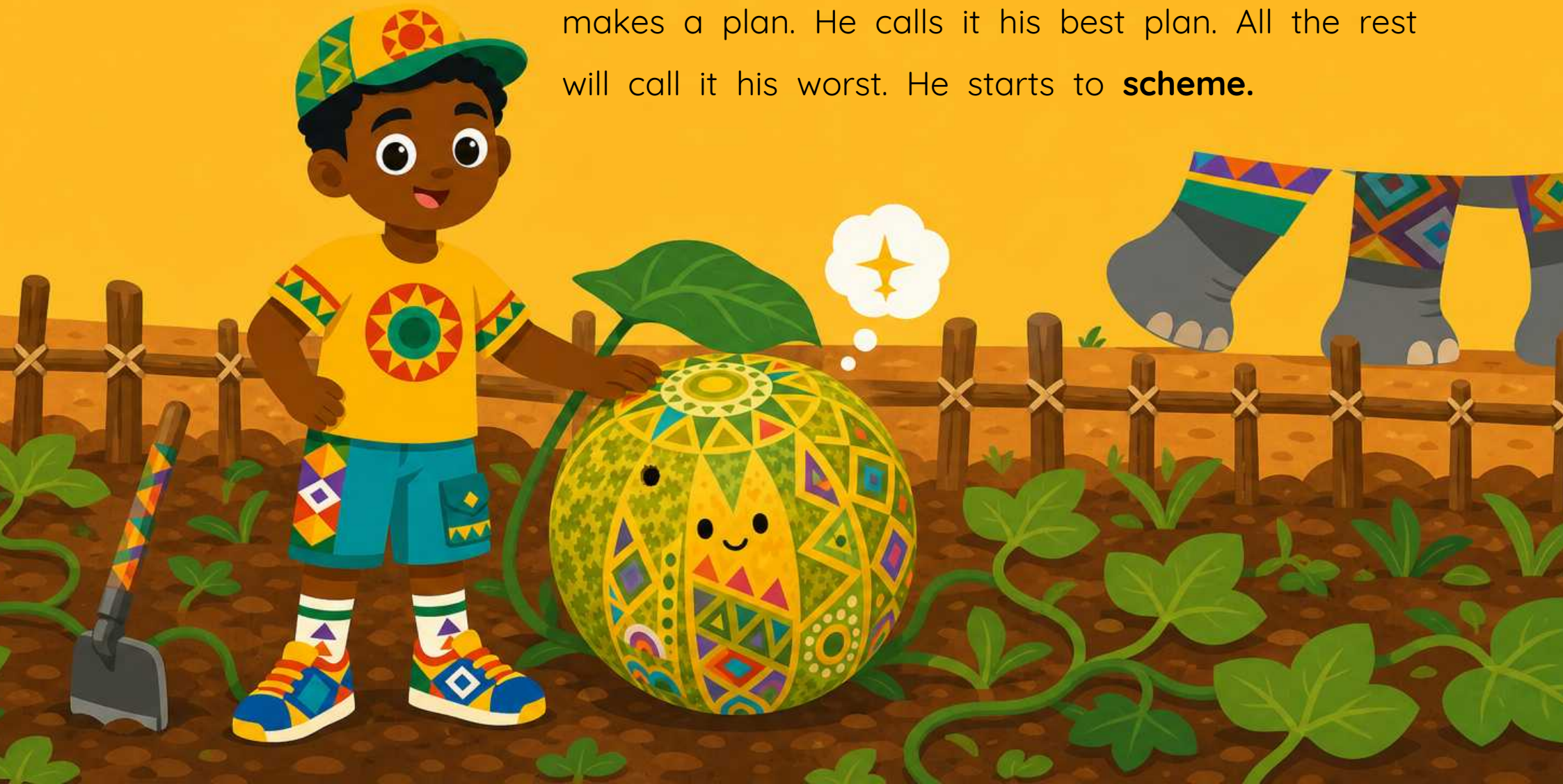
No rain has come for a long time. In all the dry land, one thing still looks good. Kofi has a big prize melon, fat and yellow-green, in the shade of its leaf. Anansi smells it from far off. He waits till the man looks away, then bites a small hole in the thick rind and slips in. It is dark and sweet and cool. He eats and eats, till his **stomach aches**, and soon he sleeps.





Now he is stuck. He has had too much to eat. He is fat as a yam, and his body presses the walls. The hole he slid in by is now far too small. He pushes. He twists. He tries to go out legs-first. It does not work at all. Then he stops and **listens**. He hears the man walk back. He pulls his legs in and stays very, very still.

The man pats the melon and walks on. Anansi is stuck, but he is not caught. He can still eat. He is cool in the shade. He is glad. Then Elephant walks past on the road up top. And down in the melon, he makes a plan. He calls it his best plan. All the rest will call it his worst. He starts to **scheme**.



'Good day, Elephant!' he calls, in a big low voice, from inside the melon. Elephant stops. She looks this way and that. No one is there. 'Look down,' says the melon. Elephant looks at the melon. 'Big and grand today, Elephant!' says the melon. Elephant looks **aghast**. She backs away, then turns and runs.





The tale spreads fast, and gets bigger with each telling. By night, all have heard that the prize melon can talk. By day, a big crowd stands at the plot. Inside the melon, he waits till the crowd is still. Then, in his best melon voice, he says, 'Rain will come in three days.' The crowd gasps. One old gal folds her arms. 'A melon does not **often** talk,' she says. But she leans in close, just in case.

The tale gets to the King's **castle** fast. The King is a big, grand man, and he wants to see the talking melon. In the melon, Anansi's **stomach** drops. Being taken to the **castle** is not the plan! But strong men lift the melon onto a cloth. Off they go to the King.



The court is full. The King sits on his stool in gold and black. His men sit in rows. The crowd presses in at each door. The melon rests on a low stand. The King leans in and says, 'We hear this melon can talk. Please, talk.' It is so still that a small sound **echoes**. Inside the melon, he thinks fast. He can stop now, or he can put on a grand show. He will never pick quiet.





He gives it all he has. The melon tells the King his soup is missing one thing, pepper-seeds. The **chef** gasps. It is true! The melon tells of a lucky day for the crop. It tells where the man with the drum lost his drumstick. Behind the big jar! True once more. The King is glad. His men are stunned. At the back, the man from the plot has a look that is hard to read.

Then one of the King's **scholars** steps up. She is sharp, and she has been still and thinking a long time. 'My King, I have a thing to ask the melon,' she says. She walks to the stand. 'Melon, what am I thinking now?' The court goes still. Inside the melon, he goes still too. He can not know it. He can guess, but it will be wrong. The room is very, very still.



'The melon,' he says at last, 'is thinking of what the **scholar** is thinking.' The court is still for one more tick. Then the King stands up slow. 'I have been good to this melon,' he says, 'but it makes my court look dumb.' His men **jostle** back. His voice drops soft and low, which in a king is worse than loud. 'Take it away.' A man picks up the melon. 'Quick,' says the King. Then the King grabs the melon and throws it.





The melon hits the court floor with a loud crack and bursts. Wet rind, seeds, and juice fly, and they **glisten** on the floor. Out rolls a very fat spider, all wet with melon. Anansi rolls under a bench and stays still. Maybe all will think he is a big seed. Kofi looks at the melon. Then at the fat wet spider. Then at the King. 'A melon that talks?' he says. And no one can stop grinning for a long, long time.

The King is mad, but he sends Anansi home with a rag and a bag of pepper-seeds. He walks back down the road, still a bit wet with melon, picking seeds from his legs. He is cool. He is clever. The King all but said yes to him! But he ate too much, and he was too fat to leave when he had to. Next time, he will **listen** to his **stomach** and stop a few bites back. 'A melon that talks?' No, no melon talks. But when the next crop comes, the man watches his melons very, very close.





Anansi Eats Too Much

Anansi the spider smells Farmer Kofi's prize melon and squeezes inside for a sweet, cool feast. He eats and eats until his stomach aches, then makes a shocking discovery: he has grown far too big to escape through the tiny hole. Stuck but not caught, and with Elephant walking by above, what wild scheme will he try next? Created to align with the UFLI Foundations scope and sequence (Lesson 118: ch /sh/, /k/; gn /n/; gh /g/; silent t), this book practices words like 'stomach', 'castle', 'aches', 'chef', 'scheme'.

Phonics Focus: ch /sh/, /k/; gn /n/; gh /g/; silent t

aches, aghast, castle, chef, echoes, glisten, jostle, listen, listens, often, scheme, scholar, scholars, stomach

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